

Heart to Heart Talks With Christians



"I was sick
and ye visited Me"

Rev. J. WEBB

2-1-7



REV. JOSIAH WEBB, B. Th.

HEART TO HEART TALKS
.. WITH CHRISTIANS ..



By Rev. Josiah Webb



Introduction by
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Introduction

(By Prof. E. M. Keirstead, D.D.)

THIS book, entitled "Heart to Heart Talks with Christians," is designed to give comfort to those that mourn. This means that it is addressed to a very large number. Sorrowing people are everywhere. Man is born to trouble. The literature of past ages shows that sorrow is not of recent origin. Bacon says that prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament : adversity that of the New. But he adds that there are hearse-like airs in the Old Testament, and that the New is not wanting in comforts and hopes. And the literature of our own day, in all its forms, recognizes the grief that abounds among the children of men.

Now to these afflicted thousands the Gospel comes with divine comfort. Our Lord says that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in Himself ; that He, the Christ of God, is sent "to heal the broken-hearted." And the Holy Spirit comes as the great comforter, the great strengthener, and consoler. The consolations of God are not small ; they are not inadequate to our needs. "Earth has no sorrows that Heaven cannot heal."

Paul blesses the God of all comfort who comforts us in our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

In this volume Mr. Webb seeks to comfort others with this divine comfort wherewith he has been com-

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forted. Nor will his labor be in vain in the Lord. For he has gathered so many of the great promises of God, has given them so full expression and so direct application, has imparted to his writing a spirit so sweet and helpful, that the book will be like "balm of Gilead" to the readers whose hearts are sore from the ravages of sin, the vicissitudes of fortune, the desolations made by age, disease and death. The reading of these chapters, descriptive of the experience that has "worked hope" for multitudes of Christians, will bring consolation and strength to many discouraged ones and will reveal to them again the heart of Christ, who is, for man, the heart of the universe. It will help the doubting ones to believe that sorrow shall be turned into joy, and that God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. May blessings abundant attend the book and its readers.

E. M. KEIRSTEAD.

Acadia College,
Wolfville, N. S.
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PORTRAIT OF AUTHOR

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Comfort for the Bereaved.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

I COME to you with a message from your best Friend.

While awaiting my Lord's pleasure I heard a voice saying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people." I knew that it was the voice of the Lord, for I had heard it before.

I started out on my errand. I looked around me in this busy, throbbing, hurrying world, and I thought that I heard a low mournful cry which seemed to come, not from the world which is seen by busy men, or written about in books, but from a world within the world. I followed the sound of that cry, and it led me into places most sacred, where men and women, as spectators, are rarely seen.

I saw in one home a young mother. I heard her cheerful voice and merry laugh. These were for her friends. When they had left the house she returned slowly and thoughtfully to her chamber, gently closed

the door, sat down by the side of an empty cot, and wept.

I heard her say, in voice so pitiful, "O why did death come and take away my sweet angel child?"

I asked "Is there no one to tell that poor mother that there is a great, kind Physician who can heal the wound which death has made? Is there no one to tell her that there is a Friend, nearer than all others, on whose loving breast she can lay her weary head?" The voice said, "Go ye."

Poor, weeping mother, look up from that empty cot. Look through those tears, to One who can bind up your sorrow-stricken heart; to One who sympathizes with you in your bereavement. It is Jesus.

Cannot you hear the echo of those words spoken many years ago, "Suffer the children to come unto me?" Will it not comfort you to know that the Good Shepherd "gathers the lambs with His arm, and folds them to his bosom?"

Cannot you hear the baby voice calling to you saying, "Come this way Mama. Everthing is so beautiful in this my new home!"

Do you not realize that you have a treasure in heaven? Just write over that empty cot, "Not lost, but only gone a little while before."

* * *

I saw a dear child. Though young in years she seemed to lack that elasticity of step that belongs to youth. She tried hard to appear cheerful and bright. As her companions skipped off for home and mother, she looked troubled and turned slowly homeward.

Unseen, I followed. There was no mother's voice to greet her with, "I'm so glad you have come home, dearie."

I saw that little one fall, tired and comfortless, into the arm-chair, where her mother used to sit. I heard her say, "I do *so* wish that my mother were here, there is *so* much that I would like to tell her, I feel so lonely without her." Then she bowed her head and wept. She wept the tears that only those who have lost a mother can weep.

My heart ached for her. I asked, "Is this poor, motherless child to be left all alone to moan her young life away? Is there no one to say a word of comfort

to soothe this troubled soul?" And the voice said, "Go ye."

My dear young sister, let me speak a word in your ear as you sit there weeping. Your dear mother is gone from your home. Your eyes often fill with tears as you read that motto which hangs on the wall, "What is home without a mother?" I have come to bring you a word of comfort—of good news.

It is a message from God, and it is this: "God loves you. He asks you to cast all your cares upon Him. He wants you to come to Him and tell Him all your troubles." He sent me to say, "When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up." It may be that your own dear mother asked Jesus to send this message to you.

There was no mother in the house of Mary and Martha, and that may have been the reason Jesus so often visited them.

Jesus wept with the mourners when Lazarus was taken from them. Will it not comfort you to know that Jesus sympathizes with you?

He will come into your home, and into your life,

if you will let him. Then, in a few years, He will take you to your mother's home, where there will be no more weary, lonely hours.

* * *

I saw, standing by a newly made grave, a woman. She had two little children; they were playing by her side. They were too young to understand why their mother wept.

She stood meditating for awhile, and then she stooped down and placed some delicate flowers on the grave and I saw that the flowers glistened with her tears. I heard her say, as she turned to leave: "Husband is gone,—O what shall I do?—Life is so dreary without him!"

Then I saw that she looked down upon her little ones, and she called them her "poor little fatherless children." Her heart sobbed, and her eyes filled again with tears, but, for their sake, I saw that she tried to bear up under the burden of sorrow.

I asked, "Is there no one to speak a word of comfort to that poor heart? Is there no one to tell her that she can lean upon the strong arm of a kind

and loving God, and of Him who will be a father to her children?" And the voice said, "Go ye."

Poor widow; listen to the message which I bring to you. It is from one who loves you with a love that is unchanging and stronger than death. He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God is a "Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow." God knows all about you and your sorrow. His large, loving heart is moved with compassion toward you.

You have been looking down to the grave, and your heart has grown heavy, and your eyes have filled with tears. Lift up your head. The Master stands by your side as he did by Mary's when she knew it not. He will guide you, and protect you, and provide for you. Lift up your eyes from the grave to the skies, and as you look listen to the words of Jesus. He says, "In my Father's house there are many mansions."

Look, poor sorrow stricken one, through the gate which our dear Lord thus opens. There is the beautiful city! Follow with your eyes through the gardens,

and fields, and groves, and streets. Listen to the glad songs of the redeemed. Do you see any mournful countenances? Ah, no. There are no funeral processions, there are no tearful eyes there. — "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Keep all this in view and follow Jesus. Your heart will then grow stronger, and a smile of hope will light up your countenance as you journey towards your heavenly home, where loved ones shall greet loved ones, and never, never part again.

* * *

There are many hearts that need a word of comfort. I cannot reach them myself. Will not some of my readers become God's messengers? God has comfort for all that mourn. This comfort flows through the broken, bleeding heart of a crucified and risen Saviour who said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."



Waiting for His Coming.

IT may be said that "death is standing at the door, therefore the aged saint must always live in fear." It is true that death is near, but he is not a frightful monster.

When you lie down to sleep at night, you say, "I may not see the morning light," but it is then that a bright ray of heaven's sun shines in at the windows of your soul, and you say in a whisper, "Lord Jesus, take care of me. Do not leave me." And then you close your eyes, and you feel perfectly safe in his keeping.

Death is not far from you, yet you are not afraid. The dark valley is right before you, but Jesus will be there. The valley does not look as dark and dreadful as it did when you were younger, and not so well acquainted with Jesus. Sometimes it seems to you as if there is a light shining at the farther end, and loved

ones who have passed through safely seem to beckon you. Then you can sing :

“ Filled with delight, my raptured soul,
Would here no longer stay;
Tho’ Jordan’s waves around me roil,
Fearless I’d launch away.”

Have you ever thought deeply about the human soul? What a subject for study! Behold, for instance, the fond mother with her darling child. What a treasure-house is her heart! Love beams from her eyes and is reflected from the child’s. What are gold and silver and diamonds, when compared with such jewels as these?

All the beautiful thoughts and expressions, and all the love and pity and kind feelings which shine forth from the soul are but the reflection of the great, loving heart of God.

When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, what cannot man do and think and say? Paul said, “ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Where is the limit, the boundary line of man’s

mind? Who can tell? Who has fathomed the depths of man's soul? None but he who breathed into man the breath of life.

The soul is greatly hindered in its development by being confined within the limits of a body which is enfeebled by sin; but wait a while, until it takes its flight and breathes the pure atmosphere of heaven.

What a great mercy it is that our Heavenly Father overrules our afflictions! What could we really know and enjoy of spiritual life without affliction? The best things lie hidden beneath the surface.

"Life," says a young sister, "is sweeter and brighter since I was sick. I did not know, and never could have known, how my parents love me, but for those long nights and days of suffering, when they sat by my side, and wrapped around me a robe of love. I have forgotten my sufferings, but I shall never forget the loving kindness that was lavished upon me, and the self-denying spirit of my parents."

"I know that Jesus will bear me up," says a dear aged saint, "I have proved him in six troubles and I know that He will be with me in the seventh. I

never could have known how precious Jesus is, and how great is His love; I never could have known the music of His voice, nor the sweetness of His presence had he not called me aside from the busy world to suffer awhile."

"Afflictions, when sanctified, do not mar, but rather help to make the soul more beautiful. Death, to the saint, is not an evil which destroys, but a process by which the soul is transformed and brought into the glorious presence of God.

There is in some seeds a something from which spring beautiful fragrant flowers, but the seed must die first. "That which thou sowest, is not quickened, except it die."

In like manner, death destroys this garment of the flesh, and God, who clothes the lilies of the field, prepares for us a more glorious body; one that will never grow old, never die.

This body is subject to the laws of gravitation. By and by, the soul will find its surroundings more favourable to its heaven-born nature; then, perhaps, faculties, which have been lying dormant in the flesh,

will bud forth and branch out like the leafy boughs of the stately oak, for, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Dear sisters and brothers; let us ever bear in mind, throughout all our days of darkness, that it is always better furt^her on.

There is a great multitude to welcome us. There are golden harps to play. There are palm-branches to wave. There are snow-white robes to wear. There is a palatial home awaiting us. There are celestial mountains to climb. There are great wonders of God's grace to behold. There is an unending, untiring, blissful life to live, but we must die first.

You may have to wait a little while before Jesus comes to take you home, but He will not lose sight of you. He will send you some foretastes of heaven's fruit, and then you will long for the change, and, like Paul, you will say, "I have a desire to depart, to be with Christ, which is far better."

You may have a few doubts and fears. You may even become a little restless, sometimes, but God's

grace will be sufficient for you, and the time will come when you will lift up your eyes and see Jesus coming for you. Then you will say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus. I am so tired. I want to go home."

"He has called for many a loved one,
We have seen them leave our side;
With our Saviour we shall meet them,
When we, too, have crossed the tide."



Comfort For Aged Saints.

I HEARD the voice of Isaiah, saying "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth: and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted."

While I listened to those words, I thought that I could see thousands of God's dear afflicted people with tearful eyes, and aching heads, and with hearts overflowing with trouble, and I asked, What is being done to wipe away those tears, to lift up those drooping heads, and to gladden those troubled hearts? And I lifted up my eyes to Heaven and said, "Lord, send me."

Now, dear friends, having thus briefly introduced myself, will you not allow me to come near to you, and talk to you a little while about the things that you love?

I know that you do not want a long sermon about everything, and addressed to everybody, therefore I come to you with a few words of comfort, all for yourself.

Perhaps it has been a long time since you have had the pleasure of sitting in your own pew in church, and of listening to a Gospel sermon.

You have often said, with the Psalmist, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." As you listened to the Gospel which revealed the "beauty of the Lord," you felt a thrill of joy in your soul, and you exclaimed, "Yea, He is altogether lovely!"

You cannot go with the people of God, "with a multitude to keep holyday" now. Your spirit is not so buoyant as it was. You tremble as you approach the dark valley.

All this comes from being deprived of the means of grace. While John the Baptist was actively engaged in preaching in the wilderness, he was strong, but when confined in prison he became doubtful, and sent to Jesus, asking, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another." David feared as old age came

on, and cried, "When I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."

O ye poor, trembling, fearful ones, listen to the words of the prophet: "Sing, O Heaven, . . . for the Lord hath comforted his people, and He will have mercy upon His afflicted." There is comfort for you. You are God's child. You are tired now after your day's work. Night is drawing nigh and you are growing weary.

The time was when you could comfort others. Your cheery smile and your heartfelt sympathy was as balm to the downcast and the fearful, but now you need to be comforted yourself.

Jesus says to you, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." God comes to you everyday in His word. Here is comfort for you. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." A good Quaker once said to a poor man who had met with a great loss, "Friend, I pity thee a sovereign." If God pitieth thee, it means much to you.

Physicians and friends can do much to comfort in old age, but "He knoweth our frame." He knows all about you. His love will never grow cold. Lean upon His strong arm. Lean heavily, for He is able to bear you up. Leaning on the everlasting arm you can say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Your sins are all washed away by the blood that was shed on Calvary, therefore you stand justified before God. Your name is engraved on the palm of His hand, and written in the Lamb's book of life. You have a home in the city of God, where there will be no old age, no tears, and no troubled hearts. Jesus has promised to come for you Himself, and take you to that place which He is preparing for His loved ones.

"Far from these narrow scenes of night
Unbounded glories rise,
And realms of joy and pure delight,
Unknown to mortal eyes..
Fair, distant land !—could mortal eyes
But half its charms explore,

How would our spirits long to rise,
And dwell on earth no more !

No clouds those blissful regions know—
Realms ever bright and fair ;
For sin, the source of mortal woe,
Can never enter there.

O, may the heavenly prospect fire
Our hearts with ardent love,
Till wings of faith, and strong desire,
Bear every thought above."

The Lord's Garden.

MY DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS.—

I have, of late, been thinking of those of you who are unable to go out into the fields and pluck the wild flowers, and watch the tall grass as it waves gleefully to the summer breeze.

I thought that I could see you sitting at your chamber window. A smile lit up your face as the sweet song of birds came floating into your room on the wings of the morning air.

But the smile did not stay long; it faded slowly away; a dark cloud gathered on your brow, and your eyes became dim with tears.

Then I knew that the glad song of birds, and the beautiful sunshine reminded you of the painful fact that you must stay in the house and suffer. The sunshine and the long summer day do not mean the same to you as they do to the little birds and flowers, and

to the children whose limbs are strong and active, and whose cheeks are aglow with health.

Nobody knows one half the pain of the body and of the mind that you, poor dear sufferers, have to endure during the hot summer days.

When all in the house are walking noiselessly, and conversing in whispers and consoling themselves with the thought that you are resting, you are saying, in voice so mournful : "How long the day seems ! I feel so tired, I shall be glad when it is night."

And then when night comes, your nerves become excited ; you try to compose yourself, but all your efforts are in vain. Then you say, as the night advances, "I am so weary of the night, when will the morning come?"

Your friends do not know all this ; you try to hide it from them ; for it would only increase your troubles and add to their burdens if you attempted to tell them all.

How good it is, when one is ill, to hear the physician say : I know all about your disease. I

understand perfectly what you suffer; you will be better after a little."

But, alas, it may be that your illness is beyond the skill of earthly physicians, and there is nothing left you but to suffer and patiently wait for Jesus to come for you.

"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, saith the Lord, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows with agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." What beautiful words!

Lift up your eyes, ye sufferers of Zion. Lift them up and behold; for know ye of a truth that there is a world, other than this—a spiritual world—a world that is within, above, and around this material world of ours.

In this spirit-world there is a sun that never sets. The light of that sun is soft to the eyes. The warmth of that sun is as balm to the wounded and sorrow-stricken heart. "Unto you," saith the Lord, "that

fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings."

In this spirit-world there is a garden. It is a most beautiful place. Angels look upon it with wonder. In this garden there are stately trees, all laden with rich, ripe fruit. There are plants, all clothed with beautiful buds and blossoms. There are vines, all hanging with large clusters of luxurious grapes.

In this Garden of the Lord there are the Wesleys and the Spurgeons and the Careys and the Moodys and the Gordons who are like unto trees that are planted by the "rivers of water."

There are others, who, though not so prominent and distinguished among men, are, nevertheless, beautiful and precious and useful. These, like choice plants and flowers, send forth a sweet fragrance for the poor heathen in India, and in the dark, low slums of our cities, and in the homes of the poor.

There are still others. These are the mourning Marys and Marthas, and the poor suffering Lazaruses, and the poor afflicted men, women and children who

are to be seen by thousands in this dark, dreary world of ours.

Their names do not appear on the fair pages of the world's history. Their work is not often rewarded on this side of the narrow stream. Their beauty is seldom seen by earthly eyes. But God knows their names. He knows how precious, and how beautiful and how useful they are.

These are witnessing for God in the midst of the most trying circumstances. Some of these dear ones, like the water-lilies, are surrounded, and often overwhelmed by the deep waters of affliction, yet they lift up their heads, with their faces looking heavenward, and reflect the smile of our dear Heavenly Father.

In this Garden of the Lord, though there are so many weak and delicate plants, death is unknown. Do you want to know why this is so? Then look away to yonder mount—Mount Calvary.

There you will behold the Smitten Rock from which flows the water of life. That river has been flowing on and on all through the ages. The streams

thereof branch off here and there to refresh some thirsty, fainting soul.

There is not a dark recess, or a lonely spot,—if there is a soul thirsting after God,—where those gentle, healing, life-giving streams do not flow.—“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.”

“O, what hath Jesus done for me !

Before my raptured eyes

Rivers of life divine I see

And trees of Paradise ;

I see a world of spirits bright

Who taste the pleasures there ;

They all are robed in spotless white,

And conquering palms they bear.”

A Stormy Night.

THIS is Sunday night. There is a fearful storm raging. It is the wildest snowstorm that we have had in Nova Scotia this season.

There is something very solemn about a storm. A feeling comes over one that something terrible is going to happen. It is then that we feel, more than at any other time, how frail and helpless we are.

But our fears are nothing when compared with the fears of the mothers, wives, and children of the men who are on the sea, vainly fighting against the merciless wind and the angry waters.

I can see those women to-night, walking their rooms, sleepless, agonizing, starting at each fresh gust of wind, trembling from head to foot, and crying, "God, have mercy !"

I can see the vessels tossed upon the foaming billows. Now they are suddenly lifted upward toward the sky, as though trying to leap out of the jaws of

death, but it is only for a moment,—down again they plunge into the gaping deep, and I wonder whether they will ever rise again. I can hear the cries of fathers, husbands and young men, who fear that they will never see children, wives, or parents again. The scene excites me: it makes me sad; but I awake from my reverie to find that I and my family are safely sheltered in our own home.

There are worse storms than this one, Storms that are not without but within—heart-storms. Perhaps my readers know already what it is to suffer with a guilty conscience. You have trembled with a fear at the sound of the rolling thunder, and at the sight of the flashing lightning of Sinai. If you do I want you to come to Jesus for,—

‘Jesus is a rock in a weary land :
A shelter in the time of storm.

Our blessed Lord and Saviour, in order to show us how God loves us, and how ready He is to forgive us when we come to Him, gave us a living, moving picture to look at,

Do you see that poor outcast yonder? Listen to

his words : "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger !"

How pitiful ! He is homeless, friendless, and hungry ; and what adds to his grief is that he has brought all this trouble upon himself. And, moreover, he realizes that he has not only wronged himself, but that he has wronged his father also.

Could anyone be in a worse plight ? But mark the change in his countenance. He lifts up his head. Now he stands erect. He is looking through the tears across fields and toward the mountains. Listen :

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants.'

There is a determined look on his careworn face. He has become desperate. He starts for home. He hesitates for a moment and looks back. He starts again. Now he is hopeful. Now he is fearful. He is tired and hungry, yet he struggles onward. Many another poor sinner has, like this prodigal, started for

home, just as fearful, but it was the only thing to do—a last struggle before giving up in despair. Satan whispered, "There is no hope for such as you." But in the language of the hymn, Satan received his answer:—

"I can but perish if I go ;
I am resolved to try—
But if I stay away I know
I must forever die."

But see! the father meets him. The servants are gathering. The happy father embraces and kisses his long lost son. "Father, I have sinned. I want to come home." Do you not hear the words of Jesus? Can you not grasp their meaning? I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Hear now the clear, rich voice of the father. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost and is found."

Are you like this prodigal, tired of a life of sin ?
Is there a storm raging in your breast ? Do you want
a shelter, a home ?

“ ‘Then’ said Evangelist, if this be thy condition, why standest thou still ?” He answered, ‘Because I know not whither to go.’ . . . Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, ‘Do you see yonder wicket gate ? The man said, ‘No.’ Then said the other, ‘Do you see yonder shining light ?’ And the man said, ‘Methinks I can.’ Then said Evangelist, ‘Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate at which, when thou knockest it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.’ ”

It may be that you, like John Bunyan’s Christian, cannot understand many of the so-called doctrines of the Bible, but do you see yonder shining light ?

You ask, “What light ?” I reply, “The light of a loving, Heavenly Father’s face, which shines through the rent veil—the broken, bleeding body of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s Cross.—Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One
There is life at this moment for Thee."

Do you see that poor publican? Can you stand by his side and pray his prayer? Then happy art thou, for thou, too, shalt be justified.

Do you see that poor demoniac? Do you feel that your heart is like his? Are you struggling against sin and Satan to make your way to Jesus? Then He who made him to sit quietly at His feet, clothed and in his right mind, can hush the angry billows upon which you are tossed into a heavenly calm.

Poor sin-sick soul; the great loving Father is on the look-out for such as you, and He has sent me to say, "Come home."

"Come ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Come in mercy's gracious hour;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power;
He is able —
He is willing—doubt no more.
Let no sense of guilt prevent you,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;

All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him,
This He gives you ;
'Tis the spirit's rising beam."



Joy Cometh in the Morning

"Why, O my soul, O why distressed,
And whence thine anxious fears?"

Cotton.

WHILE out on the Atlantic the ship sailed into a fog. For twenty-four hours we were in the midst of danger. We were surrounded by floating icebergs. How glad we were when the fog-horn ceased to blow.

All God's people know something of what it is to pass through the dark valley of anxiety and fear. I do not mean to imply that the Christian life is always dark and gloomy, but there are times when you and I cannot see our way.

Perhaps many of my readers are at this moment in trouble. It may be that your frail vessel has suddenly plunged into a dark cloud of mist, and, being surrounded with darkness, you have lost your way.

A loved one has been taken from your side, and

you are thinking, like Jacob could, that there is nothing left you but to go down in sorrow to the grave.

While on the hilltop, under a clear, blue sky, and while the sun is smiling down upon us, we fear no evil ; but when down in the dark valley, how different things appear !

Sometimes the way is so dark that we cannot see that our Father is near us ; but if we can feel that He has hold of our hand we do not fear.

But there are times when we cannot feel the grasp of His hand, nor hear the sound of His voice ; then fearful thoughts, like a mighty deluge, sweep over our souls, and we ask: "Has God forsaken us?" Then comes the heart-withering question : "Am I mistaken?"

The future grows darker ; the mist thickens ; but up from this deep, dark valley there comes a song, it is a song of love.

"I love to meet Thy people now,
Before Thy feet with them to bow
Though vilest of them all ;
But can I bear the piercing thought ?

What if my name should be left out,
When Thou for them shalt call?"

What a relief it is for us poor, fearful ones, to trace the footprints of Zion's pilgrims along the same road which we are travelling. They, too, had to pass through fiery trials, and to wade through deep waters. They are safe now in Heaven.

John saw them in his vision. "These are they," said the angel, "which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

Listen to the following, ye poor, trembling, fearful ones, and take courage: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

David was in deep distress. He cried: "My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors of

death are come upon me ; fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me." It does us good to learn that he was not lost, and that God did not forsake him. "When my heart is overwhelmed," said he, "lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

Jesus is also our fellow-traveller through the dark clouds of mist. For our sake He suffered Himself to be plunged into the darkest gulf. Listen to that plaintive cry that breaks forth from a heart that is rent with bitter agony: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"

How sweet, how welcome is the sound of the voice of Jesus, as it rings through the darkness of doubt and gloom, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world!"

Poor doubting, trembling soul, take courage. Jesus says, "Be of good cheer." *He* sees no fear. His everlasting arms are beneath you. Just let go of self and fall into His arms ; you cannot sink,—it is not your hold on Christ, but His hold on you which keeps you safe.

Sometimes, when our loved ones are very ill, they

become delirious and lose sight of their surroundings. They cannot even recognize the familiar faces of their parents. Does the mother leave the sick child then? Does the father become angry? No, no. Their eyes are filled with tears, and their hearts are moved with pity as they watch all through the days and nights that follow.

Our eyes, sometimes, through deep sorrow become bedimmed with tears, and our senses, through much pain and anxiety, become benumbed so that we cannot understand our surroundings, or recognize the presence of God. Does our Heavenly Father forsake us then? Does He grow angry with us? Ah, no. He never leaves us. He is near to His afflicted ones all the time. He loves them with an unchanging love.

A child of God who had seen many dark days and had passed through the fiery furnace of affliction, at last found herself down in the dark "valley of the shadow of death." Her parting words were:—"The clouds are lifting. The thick mist is fading away. The dark valley is now left behind. There are my loved ones. They are calling me by name. They are

coming to meet me. There are white robes and crowns and harps—but better than all—there is Jesus.”
“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

“There is a home for weary souls,
By sins and sorrow driven,
When tossed on life’s tempestuous shoals,
Where storms arise and ocean rolls,
And all is drear—’tis heaven.”

The Secret Place of the Most High

THE Christian religion is not something that can be put into words. It is not something that can be taught in the college. A student cannot become a Master or Doctor of the Christian religion.

The Christian religion is an experience; it is something that the poor, the unlearned, and the sick may grasp as well as the rich, the learned, and the strong.

Doctors of Theology, Science and Philosophy, may have a great feast spread before them, which their cultured minds may enjoy, but if they have not a deep, spiritual, experimental knowledge of God's love their learning profiteth them little.

On the other hand, a man who has even an imperfect knowledge of the Bible, but who lives in touch with God, may make greater attainments in spiritual

life than those whose minds are stored with knowledge but whose soul-life is undeveloped.

There are many good things in this life of which the poor, the unlearned, and the afflicted are deprived, but what a blessing it is that none are deprived of the *best* things !

Riches may take to themselves wings and fly away. The mind, though richly cultured, will become enfeebled, and all men, even the strongest, must return to the dust; but he who is rich in spiritual things has possessions which he will enjoy forever.

The Christian religion is to "know God."—"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

Nicodemus, though one of the masters in Israel, and Simon, though a rich Pharisee, could not understand the experience of the woman who wept at the feet of Jesus, or that of the publican who prayed in the temple.

The jailor, of Philippi, grasped more of the meaning of the Christian religion in one hour than many

learned philosophers have gathered in a whole lifetime.

Our Saviour lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and has revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

There is much in the Christian religion which cannot be understood until we are brought into the "secret place of the Most High."

None but a heaven-born soul can enter into the experience of David in the twenty-third psalm. To those who have the Lord for their Shepherd, there is no such thing as "want." There are "green pastures and still waters" where the soul can feast and rest. There is a faithful hand to "lead" and a loving heart to "restore." There is a living, loving Friend always by our side. What an experience! Even in the hour of "death" there is nothing to fear, for—

"There'll be no dark valley when Jesus comes
To gather His loved ones home."

The Christian religion has comfort for the mourner, and peace for the troubled, and manna for the hungry, and water for the thirsty. The Christian religion brings to the poor and the afflicted a key by which they may open their prison-doors, and wings by which they may soar heaven-ward and bask in the beautiful sunshine of God's smile. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

A Plea for Sunshine

HOW much brighter we feel when the sun shines ; especially after a long season of cloudy, rainy weather !

I have noticed that where there are large buildings, and higher, black-looking walls, and narrow, dirty streets, the faces of the over-crowded population look sallow and cheerless ; even little children look care-worn and tired. People everywhere need more sunshine. God has given it "without money and without price."

Many houses have the sun shining on the outside, but within it is dark and gloomy. The air is full of disease germs. The carpets and drapery must be kept bright though it may cost many pale faces and spiritless lives. Open your doors. Raise the blinds. Draw the curtains aside. Let the beautiful sunshine in. Healthy lungs, rosy cheeks and cheerful lives are what we want even if other things must go.

Why is it that so many children prefer the unwholesome society of the street to that of the home? Is it because the father comes in too tired, or is too busy to think of such small matters as home-life, or to enter into the many little things which help to make life worth living? What are men working for if it is not for wife and children and home?

Do not let your business rob your wife and children of those things which are brighter than gold, and more precious than diamonds, namely, a loving heart, a cheery voice, and a pleasing manner; it is these which make home the dearest, the sweetest place in the world.

When men are together, they often enjoy a good, hearty laugh. That is right. God intended that we should laugh, or He would not have given us the ability to do so. Laughter, like sunshine, chases away the gloom.

What is frequently needed is a good, hearty laugh in the home, where wife and children can join in. If men will take the time to make the home-life bright they will be rewarded a hundred-fold.

The cheerful smile, and loving words of wife and children, have followed many a man to his place of business, and, like dancing sunbeams, have chased away the gloom, and helped him to surmount enormous difficulties.

How dark and dreary are the homes where there is nothing talked of but business ; where every little loss or disappointment is magnified, and all the blessings of life minimized !

How hard it is for the school children ! How much they need a little sunshine in their homes, after being shut in between four cheerless, blank walls, with their dear little active forms cramped between comfortless seats and hard, wooden desks.

Why is it that there is not more sunshine in the home ? Is it because the mother is always tired and spirit-crushed, so that she cannot enjoy the childish glee and the merry prattle of the little ones ? I am sorry to say that this is too often the reason. Poor mother ! How much better it would be if you could spare a little of your time and strength and cheerfulness for your children !

If you can possibly help it, do not let anything take the sweet smile from your face. Do not allow the work of the house to take the music from your voice, nor the tender, loving words from your lips, for no one else can supply these, and, life, you know, is so dreary without them.

To enjoy sunshine in your home you must have sunshine in your heart, and there can be no real sunshine anywhere without Jesus. There are so many troubles and anxieties and cares, but Jesus will always befriend you.

Go to your own quiet, secret, sacred place, and there sit awhile at the Master's feet. Look up into His face until you catch His smile. That smile will light up your countenance, and impart new life to your body, and the smile of your face will light up the countenances of your loved ones, and your home will become cheerful and bright.

We need more sunshine in our churches. We would have more if we allowed Jesus to reign supreme there. Jesus is talked of, and prayers are offered in His name, but there is not enough of His spirit.

An ounce of real sympathy is worth more than a hundred-weight of righteous (?) indignation. A pleasant smile and a cheering word is of far more value than an eloquent address made up of grumbling and fault-finding. It is more Christianlike to reclaim than to expel. It requires more grace, and more of the spirit of the Master to do it.

Fault-finders, cruel critics, and those that make their boast that they "always speak their mind," are like heavy, black clouds, which may burst and send forth thunder, lightning and hailstones any moment; but those who have the spirit of the "Good Samaritan" are like the sunshine which chases the dark clouds away, and makes all nature rejoice.

To have more sunshine in our churches, we must try to realize how good and merciful and long-suffering God is, and then show our gratitude by trying to be to others what God has been to us.

"Let us gather up the sunbeams,
Lying all around our path;
Let us keep the wheat and roses,
Casting out the thorns and chaff.

Let us find our sweetest comfort
In the blessings of to-day,
With a patient hand removing
All the briars from the way."

A Divine Refuge

IN this world we need a refuge. The Psalmist said :
"God is our refuge." Is God your refuge? If He is you are greatly blessed, you are rich. There are thousands, yes, millions, of our fellow creatures who have no refuge or hiding place.

You may have many troubles, but those troubles, if sanctified, are like so many cords drawing you to your place of retreat.

Perhaps some poor sufferer is saying : "Nobody knows how I am troubled, or what deep waters I am passing through."

What you say may be perfectly true, but there is one who knows all about you,—that is God.

When I look around and behold the dark clouds of misery and sorrow that surround so many of the human race, my heart aches. There are thousands of heart-broken ones who are looking to governments

and societies and friends for help, but they look in vain, for there is but one refuge, and that is God.

"God is our refuge." What a refuge! With God around the children of Israel, they were safe from the plagues of Egypt, and from the sword of Pharoah. Surrounded by God they were safe from harm, though in the open wilderness.

But when the presence of the Lord departed from them, though sheltered within the mountains, and armed with the best weapons, their strongholds were as nothing before their approaching enemies.

"God is our refuge." There is nothing that can harm us, for "who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

Is it not surprising that even professing christians know so little about this refuge? They try so many of the false refuges one after another, but all in vain.

God was in the midst of His people, yet they called upon Baal to send them rain and prosperity.

Are we not, even in these enlightened days, too apt to try other refuges—refuges of lies? As a rule we do not know much about this great Refuge until we have tried in vain to hide in false refuges.

There is no rest for the weary, suffering, troubled one, until he, like John, can lay his head on Jesus' breast. When the fainting child of God feels the presence of his loving Father, and hears the gentle, paternal voice, how sweet to him is that refuge! Then he can sing,

"Other refuge have I none ;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

"God is our refuge." He is ours to enjoy. The soul who comes to this refuge will find it stored with the riches of God's grace. All the fulness of Christ is there for his safety and comfort.

This refuge is so large that we can dwell in it ; it is the "better part" which shall not be taken from us. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Are you sick? Are you overwhelmed with

trouble? Do you feel that you are not capable of fulfilling all the responsibilities that are resting upon you? Are you tempted to give up the struggle for the mastery over the world and a sinful nature?

Are you becoming discouraged in regard to church, Sunday-school and missionary work? Remember that God is *your* refuge. Go to Him. He will give you strength, or that which is equal, grace to bear up under your trials.

Jesus will speak to your troubled heart, and then the raging storm will be hushed, and there will be a peaceful calm. He will pour His love into your heart; He will stand by your side, and then the enemy will retreat, and the darkness will disperse. Your soul will find rest and your mind will receive fresh vigour, and then you will be able to start anew in the Christian life and in the Lord's work.

Spiritual Meditation

“MY meditation of Him,” says the Psalmist, “shall be sweet.” When the soul is quickened by the Holy Spirit, how different are its thoughts and desires. Look, for instance, at the returning Prodigal. Is this the young man who left his parents a few years ago? What a change has taken place! How different are his thoughts of home and father now!

There was a time when you and I did not care to cherish thoughts of God and religion in our hearts, but old things have passed away, and we behold a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus is now the “chiefest among ten thousand,” and the “altogether lovely.”

What a subject for meditation, “Of Him!” With our souls surrounded by God, with our minds illuminated by His Word, and with our hearts filled with His love, what inspiration! What exalted ideas are conceived of Him as we thus meditate!

Our blessed Redeemer is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the "High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet He dwells with him who is of a lowly, contrite and humble spirit."

When John saw the glorified Saviour he fell at His feet as dead ; such bright glory was too much for him to look upon ; but when he felt that gentle touch, and heard that friendly voice, saying, "Fear not," he revived.

Man could not approach Sinai—the mountain of fire and smoke. He could not stand in God's presence while the fierce lightning of His wrath was flashing ; but when he turns to Calvary, through which flows a river of love, and when love-cords are thrown around him, he finds himself drawn upward toward the glory-circled throne which outshines ten thousand suns and he is not afraid.

What a relief it is, when the mind is tired, to leave the hurry and cares of the smoky, throbbing city, and go away into the country and behold nature in its original beauty !

How restful is the quiet forest with its tall and

stately trees ! How delightful, after being shut in through sickness, to feel the soft breath of the wind, and to hear the gentle rustling of leaves and the sweet song of birds !

What a retreat for meditation ! As we behold the shadows and the sunshine, and the glistening dew-drops, and the sweet wild flowers, and the delicate vines, and the richly shaded foliage we exclaim, "How good and great is this God who is around us, above us, beneath us, everywhere !" And then our eyes fill with tears—tears of joy — as we realize that this God is our Father.

Then we think we can hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith !"

As we thus meditate, nature seems to dissolve, and we behold a more glorious scene. There are celestial mountains, and a beautiful landscape, and gardens

of flowers. There is a magnificent city with mansions and temples and a river of life. There are the loved ones, who have gone before us, all clothed in white, they are singing their glad songs of praise to God.

We ask, from whence proceed all this beauty and life, and all this unspeakable joy ?

As we behold and listen, the mystery unfolds, and we learn that it is Jesus, heaven's sun, shining upon all this scenery that makes it so beautiful. It is Jesus, the great Fountain of Life, that fills the redeemed soul with such rapture and delight. How restful and refreshing to the weary pilgrim are such visions of Christ and His kingdom !

We do not enjoy this beautiful view of God's face, or these spiritual, heavenly surroundings, with our carnal senses. These are for the soul's enjoyment. It is the redeemed, blood-washed child of God who is filled with joy in beholding such visions of Christ and His kingdom, and who is thrilled with delight as God unveils His face and heart and riches.

How sweet is our meditation when we realize that the God of nature and the God of heaven is our

God; and that we who are toiling and suffering in this world of anxiety and sickness and death are as dear to Him as those who are safely sheltered within the walls of the beautiful city.

Dear fellow pilgrim, let your thoughts be about "Him." Thinking of "Him" you will grow stronger to bear the pains and sorrows and cares of life. Draw nearer to Him. *He* is with you in the lonely watches of the night as well as in the long weary hours of the day.

When your heart is bowed down by the weight of grief; when you are passing under a dark cloud, then is the time to look up into His face, to listen to His voice, and to think of Him as He was to the poor sufferers and mourners of old.

While looking up into His face, and listening to His voice, and feeling the friendly grasp of His hand, your "meditation of Him will be sweet."

" 'Midst rising winds and beating storms,
Reclining on Thy breast
I find in Thee a hiding place,
And there securely rest."

Tempest-Tossed Souls.

“Have you felt the Saviour near?
Does His blessed presence cheer?
Still there’s more to follow.”

P. P. Bliss.

WHEN God’s children are shut in through darkness or infirmities they are not apt to be contented with mere forms of religion ; nothing short of a personal interview with God will satisfy them.

The lonely child is not satisfied with a view of the furniture in the house ; it longs for the fond embraces of its mother. The child is home-sick, not for the fine buildings, and for the beautiful gardens, but for a loving, maternal heart.

The weary, lonely child of God feels that this earth, at its best, is but a dreary desert place without Jesus. David was not satisfied with the beautiful singing, and the magnificent ritual of the temple service. He was not contented with the mere fact

that he was a circumcised Israelite. There was nothing that could make his soul happy but to come into the presence of his Lord. Hence he cried out: "My soul thirsteth after the living God."

Jacob saw God "face to face," and wrestled with Him until he received a blessing. He said "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." That is the religion that poor, troubled, soul-sick people need,—a religion that will bring them into the very presence of God.

When Christians can attend church regularly, enjoy the pleasures of society, and engage in the busy pursuits of life, they often make little progress in religious life.

They do not know why it is that they see so little in a good Gospel sermon, and enjoy so little the quiet hour of worship. They often blame the minister, and sometimes even the Lord Himself; for they ask: "Why does God not come and bless us? Why does He hide His face?"

The fact is, they are all the time looking down to the earth. If they would "lift up their eyes to the

hills, from whence cometh their help," they would see the face of Jesus. Then they would catch His spirit, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

A religion which brings people face to face with a loving God is the religion that can lift the dark clouds from the heart, and give wings to the troubled soul, that it may fly upward and breathe the pure atmosphere of Heaven.

People may belong to the most fashionable church, and boast of their fine church edifice. They may even read their Bible regularly, but if they have not a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ they know nothing of the joys of the Kingdom of God.

There are persons who have eyes and ears, but there is some defect for they can neither see nor hear. Unconverted people see no beauty in Christ. They hear no music in His voice. But you who have been "born again," you who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," you who have been lifted up, like Paul, to the "third heaven" into His glorious presence, will not be satisfied with anything but a place at His feet

where you can look up into His face and listen to His voice.

God wants all His children to come face to face with Himself. To bring them into this happy state He uses various means. As it is the approaching storm that brings the ship into harbour, so God sometimes uses our afflictions to bring us into His presence. When the Christian is tempted and assaulted by the foe, and when his heart is overwhelmed with grief he cries : "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

There are coast-guards whose business is to watch for distressed ships. They keep watch both night and day. In stormy weather they are specially on the alert.

One stormy night a vessel was sighted. There was something strange about its movements which attracted attention. The coast-guard signalled to the life-boat crew to be ready.

But why did they not start out to the rescue at once? Simply because there was, as yet, no signal for help. The captain evidently thought that he could steer his vessel through the storm.

But the night grew darker, the waves rose higher, the lightning flashed. The ship was struck ! The main-mast fell ! Then, the signal of distress darted upward. Then, in a moment, the reply was flashed back from the shore: "We are coming."

Some brother or sister is in trouble. Your frail bark is tossed about on the angry billows of an unfriendly world. The night grows darker. The tempest grows wilder, and you cry: "Why does not help come? Has God forgotten to be gracious?"

My dear child, you have been trying to fight your way alone. You have not yet signalled for help. So many of us suffer while trying to sail through the storm alone.

But there comes a time when all our hopes are shattered. There is no time to be lost then. The signal of distress darts upward in the form of a prayer. Then, before there is time for a reply, help comes, and we find ourselves, like the affrighted disciples of old, in the presence of Jesus, and—there is a "great calm."

Sometimes we are brought into His presence in

our meditations. We are not driven there by storms, but drawn by the cords of love. How delightful to find Jesus near to us, and to hear his voice speaking words of comfort !

God is always on the look-out for tempest-tossed souls. His ear is always listening for the cry of the distressed. His arm is always ready to rescue His loved ones. God is always ready to pour His love into your heart, and to show His smiling face. Lift up your eyes. He is calling you even now. Conscious of His presence we can sing :

“Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear ;
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform.
With Christ in the vessel, I smite at the storm.”

Spiritual Growth.

WHAT we need more than health or wealth is spiritual growth—development of soul-faculties.

Zion, in the days of the Prophet Isaiah, is represented as lying in the dust. She is weak and helpless ; the bands of captivity are about her ; her enemies are cruelly mocking and afflicting her.

How welcome was the proclamation of peace !
How beautiful were the feet of those men who were skipping over the hills, bringing the glad tidings !

How poetic and patriotic the words : "Awake, awake ; put on thy strength O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments. . . Shake thyself from the dust ; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem ; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion !"

God's messengers have been coming to spiritual Zion all through the ages. The prophets foretold the coming of Messiah. And, in the fullness of time, angels

broke through the stillness of night and sang a glad song of peace.

When the Prince of Peace came, He led captivity captive, and broke down the prison-doors to set the captives free. The Gospel has been calling upon the church to shake herself from the dust, and to put on her beautiful garments. We are no longer under the power of the evil one,—we are Christ's free men.

Spiritual growth is not only a possibility, it is a great privilege which may be enjoyed by all.

The world has always been blessed with men and women like John and Mary. We have them in our own day. How helpful they are in our churches! How full of sympathy they are toward the weak and erring! How good it is to be in their company! They are always ready with a helping hand and a word of good cheer. They are the salt of the earth. They are clothed with the "beautiful garments" of Zion. There is nothing that adorns the child of God like a gentle, sympathetic, Christ-like spirit.

The soul is a rich diamond, but it needs the light of God's face to shine upon it that its beauty may be

seen. Spiritual growth is natural to the quickened soul. All that is needed is suitable soil.

If we live in touch with God, within the sound of the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit, and close to the crucified and risen Saviour, we shall grow as naturally as do the trees in the forest.

God is greatly interested in the growth of the human soul. How interesting it is to watch the formation of the mysterious bud, and the unfolding of the beautiful flower ! It is still more delightful to watch the development of the human mind.

What rapturous embraces and kisses are lavished upon the child when it, for the first time, reflects the fond mother's smile ! What pride fills the parental heart when the son shows superior ability, or when the daughter unfolds gentle, angel-like character !

Can you imagine that our dear Heavenly Father thinks less of His children for whom Christ died ? Is He less interested in regard to the growth of *His* dear ones ? No ; there is great rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God when a child is born into the kingdom of Heaven. It is marked down in the everlasting

book of God's memory when a child, for the first time, calls Him "Father."

Brothers and sisters in Christ ; let us awake to our rights and privileges, and shake ourselves from doubts and fears, and worldliness, and slothfulness, and let us put on the beautiful garments of Zion.

The bands are broken ; they cannot bind us. The enemy will spread forth his dragon-like wings and flee from the weakest of us if we only resist him in the name of Jesus Christ.

To enjoy spiritual health, and to develop our soul-faculties, we must have Jesus in our homes as well as in our churches. We must eat and drink at the King's table. We must be actively engaged in the King's service.

We are the children of God. Christ is ours, all things are ours, and we are Christ's. Let us, therefore, grow in grace. It is so much better for us to climb the celestial mountains and breathe the pure atmosphere of Heaven, than it is to be always travelling along the earth's surface.

It is so much better to have a thankful heart than

it is to have a murmuring spirit. It shows a nobler spirit to be kind and cheerful and useful than to be a stumbling block.

We feel so much happier if we can make other people brighter and more cheerful. It is doing the little things, all the time, that enriches the soul and makes it truly great.

“O, let Thy love my soul inflame,
And to Thy service sweetly bind ;
Transfuse it through my inmost frame,
And mould me wholly to Thy mind.”

“Lovest Thou Me?”

“**H**E that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,
and I will love him, and will manifest myself
unto him.”

“He that loveth me.”—Do you love Jesus?
Then you can confide in Him. If you are sinful or
tempted and harassed by the enemy of souls, if you are
lonely and in want of a friend, or weary because of
long nights of suffering, and dark days of pain and
anxiety, there is *so* much comfort in knowing that you
can tell Jesus all about it. There is *so* much satisfac-
tion in knowing that He is the dear Refuge of your
soul. You can look up to Him and say in the lan-
guage of the hymn :

“Dear Refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee, when sorrows rise,
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies.”

Do you love Jesus? Then, delightful thought, Jesus loves you—"We love Him because He first loved us." You are greatly blessed, for "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." You know already something about God's secrets. You have heard the "small still voice" of the Lord. It is in these gentle whispers that you receive His love-tokens.

You do not behold such manifestations from the loud thunders of Sinai; it is from the solemn stillness of Calvary, while angels stop their music, while nature seems to pause, and while the ravings of demons are hushed into silence. 'Tis here, where there is no sound but that of the blood falling upon this sin-cursed earth, that you hear the sweet whispers of pardon and peace. 'Tis here, through the broken body of Jesus, that the love of God flows from His heart into yours. 'Tis here where your heart melts with love—with a love that is purer and holier than earthly affection. 'Tis here where your eyes fill with tears of joy, and you feel that heaven is not far away, but is, somehow, beautifully and delicately blended with this earth.

Some Christians allow their thoughts to stay too

long on this earth. Their minds are filled with business and cares. They, like Martha, are "cumbered about too much serving." They are too much concerned about the food that they eat, and the clothes that they wear, and the house that they live in.

Do not stay down in this dark world longer than you can possibly help, for the soul, like a delicate plant, needs the warm rays of the sun. It is from the light of *His* eyes, and from the sound of *His* voice and from the virtue of *His* body that the soul gathers its dignity of stature and its nobleness of character.

Do you love Jesus? Then come a little nearer to Him. Behold the dear Lamb of God as your sacrifice, as your atonement, as your High Priest, as your Saviour, as your Friend. As your eyes behold that face that is marred with sorrow, that brow that is pierced with thorns, that body that is mangled and torn, He will become transformed. You will see Him as the "Chiefest among ten thousand," and the "Altogether lovely."

And while others look on and say, "He hath no form nor comeliness. . . . there is no beauty that

we should desire Him," your soul's affections will reach out, like ivy tendrils, and be satisfied only in clinging to Him as your dearest and best Friend.

Physicians may fail to cure you or even to relieve your sufferings. Friends may fail in their best attempts to chase away the gloom. But when Jesus unveils His lovely face, what a change takes place! Then you can say with that dear saint in heaven,—

"Oh, leave it all with Jesus, for He knows,
He will steal the bitter from life's woes;
He will gild the tear of sorrow with His smile,
Make the desert garden bloom awhile,
Then with all my weakness leaning on His might,
All is light! All is light!"

Cast Down But Hopeful.

“WHY art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

Are you cast down, my friend? Are you down in the deep, dark valley of affliction? “Why art thou cast down?” Apparently there is no real cause, at least, you cannot find it.

But there is a reason. There are physical and mental as well as spiritual causes. Gloominess, loneliness, irritableness, and forebodings are often the effects of a weak body, overstrained nerves, insomnia, and ceaseless, gnawing pain. What a miracle it is that people do not give up entirely under such severe trials?

“Hope thou in God?” You are exhorted to look up from these disturbing elements, to One who can lift you out of the dark valley of earthly sorrow, up to the mountain peaks of heavenly joy.

You are sick and cast down now. It may be that there is no hope for you in this world, but do not despair, hope thou in God. Bye and bye you will have your health restored.

A dear saint who had suffered much and long, when he was dying said, in answer to a question "I am getting better now ; soon I shall be quite well."

Look up, desponding one, help is at hand for, "God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble."

Will earthly parents neglect and slight their sickly children? Will they not rather show them special regard and affection, and give them a hundred little love-tokens every day?

Our Heavenly Father has many dear children who are deprived of the privileges enjoyed in the house of the Lord, and who cannot walk out, like others, in the beautiful sunshine, and breathe the balmy spring air. Do you think that He neglects any of them? Do you imagine that it is possible for Him to forget any of them for one single moment?

The sickly child finds much pleasure in thinking

about its father, and in waiting and listening for his return. How welcome is the sound of his steps, and the sound of his cheery voice !

In like manner God's afflicted children find much comfort and joy in thinking about the goodness of their Heavenly Father. Their hope is not in man, nor in themselves, but in God.

Hope grows weak when we look at our gloomy surroundings, or within our own sinful hearts, but when we look away to Christ and behold Him as our Friend and our Helper, when we behold Him as the Covenant Head of the church, and when we look upon the perfection of His work, and the completeness of His salvation, and the unchangeableness of His love, hope grows strong. Then we can sing,

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness ;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.”

You may be deprived of a good many friendly associations and Christian privileges, but you are not shut away from God. You know what it is to enjoy

fellow-ship with Jesus. You have felt the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit.

You do not hear the Gospel as it is preached from the pulpit, but you can read God's Word. Our Lord said, "In the volume of the Book it is written of Me."

Sometimes, while reading the Bible, you get a glimpse of the beauty and preciousness of Christ ; such a view of Him that you are constrained to cry out, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God !"

All this is with a veil between, and at a distance. What then shall it be when heaven's gates shall be flung open to you and you see Him face to face !

Yes, the Bible is full of Christ. The prophecies, the sacrifices, the law, the priesthood, and the promises all point to Him for fulfilment and satisfaction.

Then, when we come to the sufferings of Christ, we feel as though we were standing, like Moses, on holy ground. There is the agony in the garden, and the sweat which was as blood, and the cup which could not pass from Him, and the mock-trial, and the scourging, and the crown of thorns.

What glory opens up before our eyes as we look

through those bleeding wounds—through the rent veil! We behold God as a loving Father, we hear His voice, not as the loud thunders of Sinai, but as a gentle flowing stream of loving thoughts and loving words.

What a beautiful river of life is all this! All these manifestations are present joys, foretastes of heaven's bliss. Yes, God gives His afflicted ones love-tokens, and songs to sing in the night season.

You can depend upon God. He will not leave thee. You have the experiences of the Prophets, Psalmists, Apostles and your fathers who have passed through great tribulations; and then you have your own experience. Like Paul, you can say, "I know in whom I have believed."

Heaven's sun is shining down upon you. "There are dark clouds," you say, "I cannot see the bright rays." Yes, but the clouds will soon pass away.

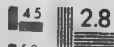
In God's garden there are beautiful flowers. "It is night," you say, "I cannot see them." True, but the night also will soon be gone.

There are green pastures and still waters before



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us. "I am imprisoned in this poor, feeble, suffering body," you reply. Yes, but your spirit can follow the Good Shepherd, and, in a little while, your soul will flee as a bird from a cage, and then you will soar upward to the city of God. Hope on, sisters and brothers.

"These checkered wilds, with thorns o'er spread,
Through which our way so oft is led,
This march of time, with truth so strong
Will end in bliss, 'twill not be long."

Beauty for Ashes.

“IT does not seem at all like the Sabbath,” sighs one of Zion’s mourners. “The time was when I went with my brethren to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

I did not know then what it was to be deprived of the means of grace. I can truly say with one of old, ‘My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.’ ”

But what a mercy it is, dear fellow pilgrim, that the house of God is still dear to you. Will you tell me what makes it so precious to you ?

“It is the sweet memory of the past. I have seen the face of Jesus here. I have heard His voice. I have felt His presence. I went to the house of worship to enquire of the Lord, and as I sat at His

feet, and listened to His Word, I beheld His beauty.—
Yes, I love the house of the Lord for —

‘There my best friends and kindred dwell ;
There God, my Saviour reigns.’

I have come to remind you that the Lord does not forsake His children when they are afflicted. He says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

The Lord stood by Daniel when he was in the midst of lions. He walked with the three young Israelites in the fiery furnace. He visited Paul and Silas in the dark prison, and, if you will lift up your eyes, you will see that He is with you in *your* loneliness.

How beautiful are the words of the prophet Isaiah concerning Christ. “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath annointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted. . . . to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, . . . the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

Think of Jesus as He was while on this earth, as

He dwelt among men. He was so tender-hearted and so gentle. Here is a poor, troubled woman, the widow of Nain. Her heart is breaking. She has lost her only son. Jesus is passing by. He looks upon her and is moved with compassion. Now—wonder of wonders! — the young man is, by a miracle, brought back from the dead and restored to his mother. — What will not Jesus do to soothe a troubled heart?

Here is another group of mourners. Jesus is in the midst. Listen to that cry of anguish. "Oh, my brother! How can I live without thee?" Now, she lifts up her eyes to Jesus and says, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Jesus himself is filled with sorrow. He groans in spirit. Behold, He weeps!

How beautifully eloquent are those tears? — When the softest sound of the human voice grates harshly upon the delicate nerves, the gentle flow of tears whispers comfort, and at once becomes a healing balm. — How it helps us when we know that Jesus is the same loving Saviour and Friend to-day.

Jesus is the great Physician. He alone is able to

heal the wounded spirit, and to bind up the broken heart. Whatever your trouble is, you can bring it to Jesus ; He has a balm for every wound.

Jesus is also Zion's Comforter. He never fails. He gives "beauty for ashes." When he comes to His poor, tried and afflicted children, He brings them good words and glad tidings of great joy. At His presence the dark clouds vanish, and the countenance becomes bright with a heavenly light.

What a change took place in Mary. Cannot you see her with your mind so mournful, so full of trouble ? The angels say unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou ?" She saith unto them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Now, Jesus Himself addresses her and asks: "Why weepest thou ? Whom seekest thou ?"

Her eyes are blind with tears, and her senses are benumbed with sorrow. She does not recognize the voice nor the person.

Now, Jesus calls her by name, "Mary." What a transformation ! Her eyes brighten. Her countenance beams with joy, and she exclaims, "Rabboni !"

—Here is an example as to the manner in which our blessed Lord gives "beauty for ashes," and the "oil of joy for mourning."

Jesus comes to you in your loneliness, and asks : "Why weepest thou?" You do not at first recognize the voice. You do not realize how near He is to you. Presently He will come still nearer, and will say, in voice so gentle so familiar, and so full of sympathy, "My child."

There is so much in those two little words. A mother catches up her babe, who has fallen and is bruised. She folds it to her breast and says, as only a mother can, "My child." Those two words are so full of tenderness, so sympathetic and soothing, that the little one forgets the pain and nestles its head against the loving heart and is soon sleeping peacefully.

My earnest prayer is that you, my friend, may hear the voice of Jesus now. If Jesus comes to you and says, "My child," and enfolds you in His loving arms, you will understand those words as saying : "I know all about your troubles and sorrows. I have come to wipe away your tears, and to bring back the

smile to your countenance, and to fill your troubled heart with joy and peace.

“Let me love Thee more and more.
Till this fleeting, fleeting life is o’er;
Till my soul is lost in love,
In a brighter, brighter world above.”

Home, Sweet Home

MY Dear Suffering Friend:—I have come to take you from your sick chamber, away into the beautiful, healthful, sunshine. I want you to accompany me to yonder mountain. Though weak, you will be able to climb with me in spirit ; for the mind, you know, never grows weary.

With the thought of home in your mind, you will skip, like a hart, along the mountain path until you stand where Moses stood, and then you, too, can view the Promised Land.

* * * * *

Now we have reached the highest peak. Now we can see the mountains that encircle the Holy City. As I behold them I hear the Psalmist, singing "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people."

Do you not feel that you are perfectly safe with such a strong wall of protection around you?

Your soul, trusting in the finished work of Christ, and having been washed in the precious blood, is perfectly secure, for "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." God says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Looking at those mountains I hear the apostle Paul saying, in voice so defiant, so eloquent, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Look into that Land. Take a long look. Tell me what *you* see.

"I see a land that is indeed flowing with milk and honey. There are groves of stately trees with their outspreading branches. There are vineyards of ripe, delicious grapes. There are large fields of rich, golden grain. There is no wonder that the Israelites exclaimed, when they saw the fruit, and heard the report of the spies, 'It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us.'"

Look again. Cannot you see, through that

picture, the Home Land of the Christian, the Land of which the Promised Land of the Jews was but a type.

"Yes, yes ! It opens up before my eyes. 'There is a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb !'

There are no dark clouds of doubts and fears and sins. There is a bright, blue, cloudless sky. There is no sun nor moon nor stars, yet the whole country is lighted up with resplendent glory, the glory of God and His Son Jesus."

Is not this view delightful ? Do you not feel refreshed ? Have you not already bathed your soul in this blissful scene ? Cannot you now say, "I sat under His shadow with great delight ?" Have you not felt the warm rays of Heaven's Sun shining into your soul as you looked up into His face ? Have you not already had a foretaste of the fruit of the gardens of heaven, borne, not on the shoulders of the twelve spies, but on angels' wings ?

Have you not heard the voice of Jesus, speaking to you in the stillness of the night, when sleep was far from your eyes, saying words of heavenly love ?

Yes, I know that you understand. Your eyes fill with tears — tears of joy. Your countenance shines with a heavenly brightness. You *have* tasted of the grapes of Eschol. You *have* quenched your thirst at the river of life. You *have* looked into the face, and listened to the voice of Jesus.

I see that your robe is already washed in the blood of the Lamb, and that all you are now waiting for is the crown and the palm branch.

Look once again. What is it that impresses you most in that view of the land of Rest?

“I realize its nearness. I am almost there. I can hear the songs that the redeemed are singing. Everything is growing brighter and more beautiful. I am losing sight of the earth with its cares ; I am looking unto Jesus. Yes, He is *my* Saviour. Heaven is *my* home. I shall soon be there.”

I am more than pleased if I have been in any way able to assist you a few steps on the road that leads to

our home. If we do not meet again on this earth, we shall meet over Jordan, then—

“We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious songs of the blest,
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.”

